

Dziga Vertov

April 15–June 4, 2011

[View related film screenings](#)

Of all the masters of Soviet cinema—most notably Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Grigori Aleksandrov—Dziga Vertov (né Denis Arkadievitch Kaufman, 1896–1954) is arguably the one whose still-radical experiments in image and sound, and enduring influence among an astonishing range of contemporary filmmakers and artists, from Jean-Luc Godard to Richard Serra to Steve McQueen, have yet to be fully appreciated or celebrated. MoMA's retrospective, the most comprehensive ever assembled in the United States, seeks to redress this with an extensive selection of Vertov's silent films, sound features, and related work by collaborators and rivals in what he called his "factory of facts." International Vertov scholars, artists, and filmmakers including William Kentridge, Peter Kubelka, Guy Maddin, and Michael Nyman will offer a contemporary perspective on Vertov's work and legacy by introducing screenings and participating in a panel discussion on May 7. The exhibition opens on April 15 with the U.S. premiere of *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), newly restored in its original full-frame version by the EYE Institute Netherlands and with live musical accompaniment by Dennis James & Filmharmonia Ensemble. A breathtaking and often startlingly funny vision of cosmopolitan life in Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa, *Man with a Movie Camera* remains among the most dynamic, and imitated, city symphonies in film history. Also featured are 11 programs of Vertov's silent films, drawn primarily from the Austrian Film Museum's unparalleled collection, including the premieres of fourteen *Kino-Week* films from 1918–19, and, for the first time together, all of his extant *Kino-Pravda* films from 1922–25, several of which are famous for Vertov and Aleksandr Rodchenko's ingenious experiments in graphic design. The exhibition continues with such masterworks as *Stride, Soviet!* (1926), *A Sixth Part of the World* (1926), *The Eleventh Year* (1928), *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass* (1930), *Three Songs of Lenin* (1935/38), and other sound films. Films by Vertov's brothers, Mikhail and Boris Kaufman, as well as films by Joris Ivens and Albrecht Viktor Blum, are also presented. Among the exhibition's many rediscoveries is the work of certain largely forgotten women filmmakers of the Soviet avant-garde, including Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov's editor and wife, and Esfir Shub, who pioneered "found footage" cinema and was instrumental in the development of dialectical montage. Vertov's exhilarating body of work must be seen not as a succession of individual films, but as one continuously evolving movie; "free of the limits of time and space," he wrote, it would lead to "a fresh perception of the world" and a revolutionary passage from the Old to the New. All films directed by Vertov, except where noted, and with simultaneous English translation or electronic subtitles. Screening descriptions adapted from texts by Yuri Tsivian and others, principally from the 23rd Pordenone Silent Film Festival catalogue.

Organized by Yuri Tsivian, William Colvin Professor at The University of Chicago, and Joshua Siegel, Associate Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art, in close collaboration with the Austrian Film Museum, Vienna. Organized in cooperation with the Austrian Cultural Forum New York.

The exhibition is made possible by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Related Film Screenings

Upcoming

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

NYMan with a Movie Camera

2010. Great Britain. Directed by Michael Nyman. Nyman presents the New York premiere of his shot-for-shot riff on Vertov's city symphony *Man with a Movie Camera*. Inspired by Vertov and Elizabeta Svilova's experiments in rhythmic editing, and by his own experience in composing electrifying original scores for Vertov's silent films, Nyman has created a deeply personal, wildly eclectic voyage around the world in 65 minutes, drawing on footage shot over the past two decades in a dozen countries including Iran and Mexico. Robert Koehler, in his *Variety* review, writes that "Nyman's score, performed by his powerful band, alternates between andante and allegro, the latter exploding with his signature locomotive propulsion." 65 min.

Wednesday, May 11, 2011, 6:00 p.m., Theater 3, mezzanine, Education and Research Building (New York premiere)

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Vesnoi/Navesni (In Spring)

1929. USSR. Directed and photographed by Mikhail Kaufman. Kaufman's breathtakingly beautiful portrait of man and nature—shot in Ukraine during the springtime floods of 1929—was a metaphor for Russia's rebirth after revolution. The film was made shortly after Kaufman photographed Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, a time when artistic differences and political pressures were widening the rift between the two brothers. Esfir Shub, whose *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* is shown on May 4, wrote that Kaufman had captured "exceptionally beautiful nature, urban and industrial surroundings, the Kolkhozs and Sovkhozs, snow and rain, frost and wind: Unsurpassed, however, is the way in which he filmed the people." Joris Ivens, whose own *Song of Heroes* is shown on May 28 and June 4, was no less admiring, writing that Kaufman "combines the acid rigorousness of Vertov with the humanistic approach of Cavalcanti." Preserved by EYE Film Institute Netherlands. Approx. 67 min.

Thursday, May 12, 2011, 4:30 p.m., Theater 2, T2 (With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin)

Thursday, May 19, 2011, 6:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Chelovek s kinoapparatom (Man with a Movie Camera): Presented by Ken Jacobs

Ken Jacobs, who was the subject of a retrospective at MoMA in 2004 and will present his experiments in 3D at Anthology Film Archives beginning May 13, introduces this screening.

Chelovek s kinoapparatom (Man with a Movie Camera)

1929. USSR. Directed by Dziga Vertov. MoMA presents the U.S. premiere of the EYE Film Institute Netherlands' definitive new restoration of *Man with a Movie Camera*, which allows us at long last to appreciate cameraman Mikhail Kaufman's dazzling Constructivist frame compositions by preserving the film's original full-frame image. The opening-night screening features Filmharmonia Ensemble performing Dennis James' critically acclaimed score, which was inspired by original accompaniment notes left by Vertov himself. A breathtaking and often startlingly funny vision of cosmopolitan life in Moscow and Odessa,

Man with a Movie Camera remains among the most radical, and imitated, films in cinema history. It is a film about its own creation, about the material process of work, about cinema as a means of transforming perception and spatial-temporal relations, about the power of *kino-pravda* ("film-truth") to unmask and banish oppression and ignorance, and about a New Russia rising out of the ashes of the Old, symbolized by the spark of the movie projector coming to life at the start of the film, and by the famous trick shot of the Bolshoi Theatre collapsing on itself at the end. Silent. 65 min.

Thursday, May 12, 2011, 6:30 p.m. (Introduced by Ken Jacobs. With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin)

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Odinnadtsati (The Eleventh Year)

1928. USSR. Directed by Dziga Vertov. Dziga Vertov, cinematographer Mikhail Kaufman, and editor Elizaveta Svilova worked in perfect harmony to create this visually and rhythmically spectacular film. Made to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the revolution—but only completed in "the eleventh year"—the film charts the excavation of a future river bed for the construction of a giant hydroelectric power station. In 1928, a woefully misguided critic wrote that "by means of extremely complex montage and photographic tricks, Vertov and his cameraman Kaufman achieve the demonstration on screen of almost absolutely nonobjective, abstract movement 'in its pure form,' which smells strongly of the idealistic, non-objective 'Constructivism' of the Western European Dadaist innovators and their ilk. It cannot be gainsaid that all these quadruple exposures, reverse filming, and so on and so forth, are very pleasant, often externally stunning, effected with great 'taste' and skill, but what, besides an easy-on-the-eye 'spectacle for spectacle's sake,' can such an October anniversary film give the viewer?!" Silent. Approx. 52 min.

Im Schatten der Maschine—Ein Montagefilm

1928. Germany. Directed and edited by Albrecht Viktor Blum. Approx. 20 min.

Saturday, May 14, 2011, 6:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 (With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin)

Sunday, May 15, 2011, 5:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Kolybel'naja (Lullaby)

1937. USSR. Directed by Dziga Vertov. Vertov begrudgingly admitted that D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) was among two or three fiction films that had influenced him. He was particularly inspired by the film's recurrent image of a maternal Lillian Gish, and the accompanying intertitle quote from Vertov's favorite poet, Walt Whitman: "Out of the cradle endlessly rocking...." It was this image that guided Vertov when he was commissioned in 1937 to make a feature-length documentary on the State's protection of mothers and children, and on the vast network of maternity homes, nurseries, and kindergartens that had been promised in Stalin's Constitution of 1936. Hence the film *Lullaby*, with its approximately 600 shots of women of all ages, nationalities, and classes—Spanish, Ukrainian, Russian, Uzbek, and so on—all symbolizing Woman and Motherhood. And the man these women are shown to love and worship? None other than Joseph Stalin, their father, leader, and protector. Despite Vertov's best intentions, the film was shelved as soon as it was finished; rumor has it that Stalin was unhappy with the interminable images of him being smothered by all these women, with their speeches, flowers, and cloying embraces. 58 min.

Saturday, May 21, 2011, 6:45 p.m., Theater 2, T2

Sunday, May 22, 2011, 5:15 p.m., Theater 2, T2

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Tri geroini (Three Heroines)

1938. USSR. Directed by Dziga Vertov. Vertov the filmmaker had two passions: for women and for planes. The best sequence in *Lullaby* (1937) is of a young and irresistibly self-effacing woman describing her first parachute jump. These two passions came together in *Three Heroines* (1938), which follows the legendary female pilots Raskova, Osipenko and Grisodubova in their failed but magnificent attempt to make the first nonstop trans-Siberian flight. Using documentary reenactments, Vertov depicts the flight, the crash, the rescue, and the women's heroic return to Moscow, where crowds shower them with flowers, and leaders with speeches. The film's unspoken irony: a good crash and a successful rescue make a better story than a mission accomplished. 54 min.

Sunday, May 22, 2011, 3:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

Wednesday, May 25, 2011, 6:45 p.m., Theater 3, mezzanine, Education and Research Building

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Hände—Eine Studie

1928/29. Germany. Directed and edited by Albrecht Viktor Blum. 10 min.

Shankhaishkii Dokument (Shanghai Document)

1928. USSR. Directed by Yakov Bliokh. Approx. 58 min.

Friday, May 27, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

Sunday, May 29, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Komsomol (Pesn o gerojach) (Song of Heroes)

1932. USSR. Directed by Joris Ivens. After an inspiring trip to the Soviet Union at the invitation of Vsevolod Pudovkin, Dutch documentarian Ivens made this extraordinary propagandistic film about the construction of a new blast furnace in the industrial city of Magnitogorsk in the Urals, and the "heroic" contributions of Komsomol, the communist youth workers organization, to Stalin's Five Year Plan. The film combines documentary with fictive elements, but the real fiction is the film's claim that Komsomol volunteers, not thousands of imprisoned Kulach laborers, built the furnaces. Courtesy EYE Film Institute Netherlands. 50 min.

Tebe, Front! (For You, Front!)

1943. USSR. Directed by Dziga Vertov, Elizaveta Svilova. From the start, Vertov made himself known as an irreconcilable enemy of "acted films," which he regarded as a violation of truth—and truth was what Kino-Eye was all about. At the peak of World War II, however, such lofty artistic principles proved impractical. *For You, Front!* is a fiction film with a script and two actors. In a letter to her fiancé Dzhamil, a soldier on the front, Saule asks if there is anything he needs from "our beloved Kazakhstan." Yes there is, he replies, and it is something buried inside the mountain: lead, that most precious of all metals, which can be used to make bullets to kill the enemies of "our beloved country." Vertov's poetic and patriotic movie was never released, however, most likely because the wartime censorship did not want Allied troops to pinpoint the location of the lead mines. 45 min.

[Saturday, May 28, 2011, 5:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[Saturday, June 4, 2011, 2:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

Past

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

A Special *Man with a Movie Camera* Film Concert by Dennis James & Filmharmonia Ensemble

Chelovek s kinoapparatom (Man with a Movie Camera)

1929. USSR. Dziga Vertov. 65 min.

[Friday, April 15, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Theater 1, T1 \(U.S Premiere. Introduced by Yuri Tsivian, with Alexander Horwath, Director; and Adelheid Heftberger, curator, Vertov collection, Austrian Film Museum\)](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Kino-Pravda, nos. 1–8

1922. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 71 min.

[Saturday, April 16, 2011, 2:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin. Introduced by Yuri Tsivian\)](#)

[Wednesday, April 20, 2011, 6:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Kino-Glaz (Zhizn Vrasplokh) (Kino-Eye (Life Off-Guard))

1924. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 70 min.

[Saturday, April 16, 2011, 4:15 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin. Introduced by Yuri Tsivian\)](#)

[Saturday, April 23, 2011, 6:30 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Entuziazm (Simfonija Donbassa) (Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass)

1930. USSR. Dziga Vertov. 65 min.

[Sunday, April 17, 2011, 2:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(Introduced by Alexander Horwath, Adelheid Heftberger\)](#)

[Friday, May 6, 2011, 6:30 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(Introduced by Peter Kubelka\)](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Tri pesni o Lenine (Three Songs of Lenin)

1934/38. USSR. Dziga Vertov. 67 min.

[Sunday, April 17, 2011, 4:15 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(Introduced by Alexander Horwath, Adelheid Heftberger\)](#)

[Saturday, April 30, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Vertov Filmed in Person

1922/1923/post-1930. USSR. Approx. 1 min.

Vertov Interviews

1922/1923/post-1930. USSR. Approx. 1 min.

Post-1935. USSR. Approx. 1 min.

Kinonedelja (Kino-Week) nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 21–25

1918. Russia. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 72 min.

[Monday, April 18, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[Wednesday, April 27, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin\)](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Kinonedelja (Kino-Week) nos. 31–35

1919. Russia. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 62 min.

Kino-Pravda [excerpts]

1930s. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 16 min.

[Monday, April 18, 2011, 6:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[Wednesday, April 27, 2011, 6:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin\)](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Kino-Pravda nos. 9–11, 13 (“Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow”: A Film Poem Dedicated to the October Celebrations)

1922. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 90 min.

[Thursday, April 21, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin\)](#)

[Sunday, April 24, 2011, 3:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Heart of the World

2000. Canada. Guy Maddin. 6 min.

Kino-Pravda nos. 18, 20–22

1924–25. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 90 min.

[Thursday, April 21, 2011, 6:15 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(With piano](#)

[accompaniment by Donald Sosin. Introduced by Guy Maddin\)](#)

[Saturday, April 23, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(Vertov films only\)](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Kino-Pravda nos. 14–17

1922–23. USSR. Dziga Vertov.

Segodnia (Today)

1923. USSR. Dziga Vertov.

Sovetskie Igrushki (Soviet Toys)

1924. USSR. Dziga Vertov.

[Friday, April 22, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 \(With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin\)](#)

[Monday, April 25, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2](#)

[FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS](#)

Padeniye Dinasti Romanovikh (The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty)

1927. USSR. Esfir Shub. 101 min.

Thursday, April 28, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 (With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin)

Wednesday, May 4, 2011, 6:30 p.m., Theater 2, T2 (Introduced by Annette Michelson, a founding editor of the journal *October*)

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Kino-Pravda No. 23 (Radio Pravda)

1925. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 23 min.

Shagai, Sovet! (Stride, Soviet! (The Moscow Soviet in the Present, Past, and Future))

1926. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 70 min.

Friday, April 29, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

Saturday, April 30, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 (With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin)

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Shestaia chast mira ["Probeg Kino-Glaza po SSSR." "Eksport i import gostorga SSSR."] (A Sixth Part of the World ("A Kino-Eye Race around the USSR." "Export and Import by the State Trading Organization of the USSR"))

1926. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 60 min.

Kino-Pravda no. 19

1924. USSR. Dziga Vertov. Approx. 18 min.

Sunday, May 1, 2011, 2:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2 (With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin)

Thursday, May 5, 2011, 6:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Les Halles centrales

1927. France. Boris Kaufman. Approx. 7 min.

Moskva (Moscow)

1926. USSR. Mikhail Kaufman, Ilya Kopalin. Approx. 66 min.

Sunday, May 1, 2011, 4:30 p.m., Theater 2, T2 (With piano accompaniment by Donald Sosin)

Wednesday, May 4, 2011, 4:00 p.m., Theater 2, T2

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Who Was Dziga Vertov?

As a prelude to the evening's panel discussion, John MacKay, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Film Studies, and Chair of the Film Studies Program at Yale University, presents a lecture based on his forthcoming *Dziga Vertov: Life and Work*. Richly illustrated with film clips, MacKay's lecture traces Vertov's career from his early years as David Kaufman in the city of Bialystok through his formative experiences in World War I and the Russian Civil War, and culminates in his masterpieces of the 1920s and 1930s. The lecture will also

examine Vertov's famous anti-fiction-film manifestos, specific examples of his complex "rhythmic editing," and his extraordinary experiments with documentary sound. MacKay, who will moderate the May 7 evening panel discussion with William Kentridge, Peter Kubelka, and Michael Nyman, is the author of numerous published essays on Vertov, as well as a book on nineteenth- and twentieth-century European lyric poetry. Approximately 90 minutes.

Saturday, May 7, 2011, 3:00 p.m., Theater 3, mezzanine, Education and Research Building

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

Vertov's Legacy: An Evening with William Kentridge, Peter Kubelka, and Michael Nyman

A distinguished panel of award-winning contemporary artists, filmmakers, and composers offers a fresh reconsideration of Vertov's work and influence in the twenty-first century. William Kentridge is a South African artist, filmmaker, and theater and opera director who was the subject of a major 2010 retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art and SFMOMA, and who also staged an original production of Dmitri Shostakovich's *The Nose* for New York's Metropolitan Opera. Peter Kubelka, an Austrian pioneer of experimental filmmaking and expanded cinema, and a brilliant theorist and teacher, was responsible for the restoration of Vertov's *Enthusiasm* and was instrumental in preserving a major collection of rare Vertov film materials at the Austrian Film Museum, an institution that he co-founded in 1964. The British composer, filmmaker, and photographer Michael Nyman, whose work in cinema includes collaborations with Peter Greenaway and Jane Campion, has devoted recent years to writing original scores for Vertov's *A Sixth Part of the World*, *The Eleventh Year*, and *Man with a Movie Camera*, the latter the inspiration for his own recent film, *NYMan with a Movie Camera*, which he will present on May 8. The panel is moderated by John MacKay, a Yale University professor and author of the forthcoming *Dziga Vertov: Life and Work*. Approximately 120 minutes.

Saturday, May 7, 2011, 6:30 p.m., Theater 2, T2

FILM SCREENINGS & EVENTS

NYMan with a Movie Camera

2010. Great Britain. Michael Nyman. 65 min.

Sunday, May 8, 2011, 5:00 p.m., Theater 3, mezzanine, Education and Research Building (New York premiere. Introduced by Michael Nyman)

Ukrainian poster for *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass*. 1930 (poster 1931). USSR. Directed by Dziga Vertov